

On the Convergence and Development of Television Media in the Intelligent Era (Postprint)

Authors: Yin Guangfu

Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

With the advent of the network era and artificial intelligence, the impacts and challenges confronting traditional television media are self-evident. At this year's "Two Sessions" in China, Xinhua News Agency's "Media Brain" produced and released the world's first MGC (Machine Generated Content) video news concerning the Two Sessions—"2018 Two Sessions MGC Public Opinion Hotspots"—in a mere 15 seconds. The application of "Media Brain" has ushered in a major transformation in media program production methodologies. This article examines how television media can accelerate complementary advantage integration and integrated development with emerging media in the intelligent era, transitioning from the "addition" phase to the "fusion" phase of media convergence, thereby expediting the formation of new communication models.

Full Text

Preamble

Abstract: With the advent of the internet era and artificial intelligence, the impact and challenges confronting traditional television media are self-evident. At this year's Two Sessions in China, Xinhua News Agency's "Media Brain" produced and released the world's first MGC (Machine-Generated Content) video news about the Two Sessions—"2018 Two Sessions MGC Public Opinion Hotspots"—in just 15 seconds. The application of "Media Brain" has brought significant transformation to media program production methods. This article explores how television media in the intelligent era can accelerate complementary advantages and integrated development with emerging media, moving from the "addition" phase of media convergence to the "integration" phase, and accelerating the formation of new communication models.

Keywords: Intelligent Era; Television Media; New Media; "Media Brain"; Convergence

Chinese Library Classification: G206

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2018)03-032-02

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2018.03.012

Author: Yin Guangfu

With the arrival of the internet era and artificial intelligence, traditional television media face tremendous impact and challenges. Due to traditional communication methods that fail to meet audience demands, television media—while improving program quality—are actively pursuing integration and cooperation with new media. Surveys indicate that among the post-90s generation, the proportions who do not watch television, listen to radio, or read newspapers have reached 20%, 50%, and 80% respectively, with average daily mobile phone usage reaching 3.8 hours. Emerging media has gradually developed into the primary channel for information dissemination, making accelerated transformation imperative for television media to escape their predicament.

2. Current Status and Problems of Television and Emerging Media Convergence

In August 2014, the fourth meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform reviewed and approved the “Guidelines on Promoting the Integrated Development of Traditional and Emerging Media.” The meeting emphasized that to promote such integration, we must strengthen internet thinking, adhere to complementary advantages and integrated development between traditional and emerging media, and promote deep integration in content, channels, platforms, operation, and management to form a modern communication system that is three-dimensional, diverse, and convergent. This marked the beginning of convergence between television media and emerging media.

According to the latest statistics from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China’s total fixed broadband users have reached 337 million households, while 4G users among 1.3 billion customers increased to 1 billion by the end of last year. This data demonstrates the enormous impact of internet-based new media on traditional television media. Yu Guoming, Vice Dean of the School of Journalism at Renmin University of China, points out in “Internet Logic and Key Issues in Media Industry Development” that the original logic of media development is no longer sustainable. In fact, we face a series of changes: reading methods have changed, marketing has changed, production methods have changed, and communication methods have changed [1].

For a considerable period, television media held clear advantages among the three traditional media of newspapers, radio, and television due to its strong sense of presence, vivid and authentic visuals, broad coverage, and audience participation features. However, the emergence of new media has rapidly transformed how people watch television. The shortcomings of television media—

linear transmission, fleeting content, poor preservation, and inability to replay—have become increasingly prominent, directly resulting in serious audience fragmentation, reduced advertising business, and significant declines in media revenue. Compared with television media, new media features rapid dissemination, high coverage, and strong interactivity, allowing audiences to access content anytime and anywhere without temporal or spatial constraints. Consequently, new media audiences continue to grow.

Through journalists' unremitting efforts in recent years, China's media convergence development has achieved certain results. The "China Media Convergence Development Report (2017-2018)," jointly compiled by the Beijing Journalists Association and Jinan University and published by the Social Sciences Academic Press, shows that in 2017, China's media convergence development is breaking through bottlenecks and entering a new stage of deep integration, diversified development, and continuous upgrading. Central and local mainstream media have intensified their convergence efforts, further innovating concepts, integrating resources, and transforming and upgrading, achieving remarkable results in deep media integration. China's media convergence has evolved from a simple additive transformation stage to a deep integration and mutual growth phase.

Nevertheless, despite breakthroughs in television media convergence, three aspects remain worthy of attention and consideration at the current stage.

2.1 Insufficient Depth of Media Convergence

Some television media, in their convergence efforts, focus on layout and expansion across various channel platforms and terminals, believing that simply clipping programs into short videos for official websites or pushing them daily to WeChat public accounts constitutes media convergence. Upon careful analysis, however, we find that some television media's official accounts on Weibo, WeChat platforms, news clients, and audio-video clients suffer from poor information attention, low user activity, and weak communication power. The reason is that media convergence is not simple superposition of channels but requires deep integration within and between media organizations, establishing workflows suitable for internet—especially mobile internet—communication. Only by producing quality content from the user's perspective according to different platforms' communication patterns and user acceptance habits can optimal communication be achieved. Long-term failure to produce content tailored to different communication channels' characteristics and user needs naturally fails to gain audience recognition, resulting only in ineffective communication.

2.2 Insufficient Presentation of Quality Content

Whether television or new media, the key to winning audiences lies in content. Television media's greatest advantage over new media lies in video program production. Television media should therefore excel at video production, refining and optimizing programs. Yet turning on the television reveals few truly out-

standing programs, with serious homogenization across stations. At the same news scene, multiple reporters from different columns of the same media outlet may appear, causing resource waste, increasing production costs, and confusing audiences about each channel's precise positioning. Since television media's greatest advantage is video program production, they must leverage this traditional strength, adhere to content as king, maintain constant awareness of quality, express through high-quality content, and produce meticulously and target precisely. Through excellent programs, television media can enhance their communication power, guidance, influence, and credibility, naturally winning audiences over time.

2.3 Extreme Shortage of All-Media Talent

Media competition is fundamentally talent competition, and media advantages corely depend on talent advantages. Journalism workers must strive to become all-media and expert talents. Currently, television and new media program production workflows involve editors and reporters first producing television programs for broadcast, then clipping one or several short videos with related text and images for post-production staff to push to WeChat public accounts and official websites. Since these short videos are clipped from finished programs, they lack strong appeal to new media audiences. The same content requires different presentation forms—one expression for television, another for the internet. Today's audiences are accustomed to fragmented reading, requiring our content to be attractive, entertaining, and interesting enough to instantly capture them. Television media currently suffer from an extreme shortage of all-media talent, with many television workers' thinking still stuck in conventionally producing daily television programs, lacking all-media concepts and thinking. Television media must now prioritize cultivating all-media talent. While being able to “write, operate cameras, take photos, edit footage, and use software” represents one dimension of all-media talent, equally important is whether they possess “all-media” awareness conceptually and can skillfully use all-media methods to present content and products. Not all content suits new media dissemination, and knowing when to use which form is essential for all-media talent [3].

3. Strategies for Traditional Television Media in the Intelligent Era

Deep integration within and between media organizations requires establishing workflows suitable for internet—especially mobile internet—communication. According to different platforms' communication patterns and user acceptance habits, producing quality content from the user's perspective can achieve optimal communication. Long-term failure to tailor content to different communication channels' characteristics and user needs naturally fails to gain audience recognition, resulting only in ineffective communication.

On March 2 this year, Xinhua News Agency's “Media Brain” produced and

released the world's first MGC video news—"2018 Two Sessions MGC Public Opinion Hotspots"—in just 15 seconds, ushering media development into the intelligent era. "Media Brain" provides eight functions based on cloud computing, Internet of Things, big data, and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, covering the entire news chain from clues, planning, and interviewing to production, distribution, and feedback. The application of "Media Brain" has prompted major transformations in news production and communication.

How should television media respond to the intelligent era's arrival?

- (1) Accelerate content-technology integration by widely applying artificial intelligence technology to all aspects of television program reporting, including clues, planning, and production, to enhance news production and communication efficiency.
- (2) Adopt user thinking and lead content innovation through short video production. Continuously enrich reporting forms, uphold content as king, present excellent program content, and attract audiences.
- (3) Television media must not only solve internal deep integration problems and strive for mutual support and integration across the television industry from central to local levels but also endeavor to achieve cross-industry media integration.

In the intelligent era, if television media aim at their targets, innovate systems and mechanisms, strengthen technical support, promote genuine "integration as one," establish workflows suitable for internet—especially mobile internet—communication, and achieve comprehensive coordination, the day when television media transforms into new mainstream media will soon arrive.

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(Author's Affiliation: Anhui Broadcasting Corporation)

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.